The Seed Sower.

A Magazine for the Church, the School, and the Home.

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VOL. IV. NO. 6. AUGUST, 1896. ONE PENNY.

Parting.

We have had many partings. In the gloom
Of wintry twilights, moaning winds have whirled
Our farewell words afar. A quiet room
Has kept us safe a moment from the world
For fond last words and clinging kisses sweet.
The lark has seen us in a dewy lane
Unclasping hands; in many a busy street;
Beside an angry sea in blinding rain;
Upon a breezy moor at early morn,
Before the butterflies were flown abroad;
Among the standing shocks of yellow corn;
Upon a churchyard's green and hallowed sod;
Have farewell words been spoken, while the smart
Of parting pangs drew closer heart and heart.

Brave for each other's sake, our partings wear
An aspect almost cheerful, eye meets eye,
As hand holds hand; love gives us strength to bear
Our silent anguish as the moments fly.
We have had many partings, but we know
More solemn farewell doth before us lie,
When death warns one of us to rise and go.
But which shall be the traveller, thou or I?
Shall I stand by to watch thy life's eclipse,
To mark the pang that sets thy spirit free?
Will the dark waters gather to my lips,
Or shall I watch them closing over thee?
It matters little; love is very strong,
That parting is our last, and is not long.

Who Knows?

What prospects to the eyes by Night are shown!
Doth she not give, to our delighted gaze,
Those wondrous worlds that star heaven's distant ways;
All which, to our weak sight, would shine unknown,
Did she not veil for us day's blinding gaze?

Death is the night of life? and it may be—
Though some misdoubt it—that the final throes
Soon to end mortal vision, may disclose
Spheres of bright being man may not yet see,
But which, hereafter, shall be his, who knows?

JOHN COTTON.

Reforms needed in the Pulpit.

A LECTURE DELIVERED BEFORE THE SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE IN NEW YORK.

BY FELIX ADLER, PH.D.

When one remembers the power wielded by the great preachers in former ages, one cannot help reflecting how much the influence of the pulpit has declined at the present day.

Recall for a moment a few of the great pulpit orators of the past. Think of the dwarf, Peter the Hermit, who, by his passionate preaching, roused all Europe and started the Crusades. Think of Bernard of Clairvaux, the profound scholar, the mystic, who, with the help of his eloquent tongue, made himself arbiter in the disputes of kings, and decided the claims of rival popes. It is narrated that, at one time, he was preaching to the Germans on the Rhine in a language which they did not understand, and yet so magnetic was the effect of his presence, so thrilling the tones of his voice, and so awe-inspiring his commanding personality, that his audience fell on their knees before him and wept like children at his feet. Think of Berthold of Regensburg, the sweet Berthold, as he is popularly called, who preached from the hill-tops and in the open field, who, a forerunner of Luther, denounced the infamous sale of indulgences, and called the rich men of his time to account in the bluntest terms for the oppression which they practised on the poor. Think of Savonarola, who was for a time practically the ruler of Florence, who aspired to transform his city of Florence into a veritable city of God, and to make righteousness the ruling principle in municipal government. Think of John, Archbishop

of Constantinople, surnamed John "Golden-mouth," who denounced the vices of the Byzantine Court, within earshot of the Imperial Palace, and who was finally hurried off into exile that the silence of a barbarian land might smother the accents of his invincible plea for virtue. Think of the Hebrew Prophets, who, if we regard them merely as orators, seem to tower above even the most gifted of their successors, whose every word seems to be plucked from the roots of the heart, with palpitating heart-fibre still in it.

In modern times the influence of the pulpit has unmistakably declined, and various causes are assigned to explain this fact. For instance, the rise and the growing power of a free press, the multiplication of cheap literature, and the vigorous competition of the lyceum platform. But while all these causes have, no doubt, operated, and are still operating, to bring about the result which we witness, the chief reason, as I think, is, that the interest of mankind in purely doctrinal questions has diminished, and that the clergy have not had the courage or the moral backbone to identify themselves with the great moral issues of the time, to interpret the larger moral needs of our age. To show that this is so, I need only to point to one significant fact, namely: that, in the late anti-slavery struggle, the American Church, of course, with noble and honorable exceptions, but the Church, as a whole, either remained timidly neutral, or was arrayed on the side of the oppressor rather than of the oppressed; that a very large number of the American clergy, while that struggle was going on, were busy heaping up quotations from the Bible mountain high as a barrier in the way of emancipation. And, while at present many of our pulpit teachers are rendering valuable auxiliary service in the various minor moral movements, yet it is a fact that nowhere have they taken the grand initiative, nowhere does the pulpit lead the larger moral movements of the age. It seems to me, therefore, of the utmost importance that the pulpit, in order to regain something of its pristine influence, should deal not only with far-off matters, but shed the light of eternal truth on temporal affairs, and that it should render effective service as a guide in the evolution of a higher political and social morality. Now, in order to bring about such a result, certain reforms are needed in the pulpit, and I propose to speak of a few of these needful reforms to-day. But before doing so, and with a view to gaining the right point of view for the consideration of such reforms, I should like to sketch briefly the proper functions of the preacher, regarding him merely in the light of a moral teacher.

In the first place, then, the preacher should be a moral force in the community. He should communicate moral impulses, he should infuse moral heat into his hearers. For it is the business of the preacher, not only to state moral truths, but to fill his hearers with enthusiasm for those truths, to awaken in them the desire to realise those truths in their own lives. He should make his word not only a lamp to enlighten, but a torch to kindle, and he can only do this if he has an intense conviction himself; he can only do this by bringing his own soul into contact with the souls of others, by putting his own earnest purpose as a yeast into the hearts of others.

In the second place, the preacher should be a moral physician. He should suggest methods for the analysis of character. He should study the psychology of the feelings, he should make himself familiar as far as possible with the pathology of the inner life. He should give helpful counsel to parents in regard to the education of their children. He should seek to unravel the skein of human relations when it becomes tangled, and to show men how they can enter into and maintain harmonious relations with one another, he should be a peacemaker as between man and man. And especially should he explain the open secret whereby everyone can secure for himself the boon of lasting inward peace despite all outward conflicts. He should be a priest, practising in his own case the laws of the spiritual life which he preaches to others.

But there is a third and larger function which the preacher ought to discharge. He ought not only to deal with the ethics of individual life, but should try to aid in solving the moral problems that touch entire classes of men, or society as a whole. And the proper discharge of this function is particularly important at the present day. The questions which so deeply agitate our people at this moment, are at bottom questions of right and wrong. The editorials of our leading newspapers are just now filled every day with

ethical philosophy, though, it is true, ethical philosophy often of a very crude and confused sort. The elementary notions of public right are at issue! The right of property, for instance, is emphasised It is held up as a sacred right. But the question arises: What makes it sacred? Why, apart from the superficial teachings on this head of the current political economy, should it be held sacred? What is the moral basis of property? The right of the labourer to a greater share in the products of his labour is urged. What is the moral basis of that right, and what are its limitations? The State is loudly called upon to interfere on behalf of its poorer citizens. What are the moral functions of the State? In how far can it help its poorer citizens? In how far is it interdicted by its very nature from attempting to do so? You will concede that these are fundamental questions. But they have never yet been fully answered in clear, just, and simple fashion. Nor can we expect that adequate answers will be given by the partisans on either side. Such answers can only be given by those who stand between the conflicting parties, or rather above the conflicting parties, whose passions are not engaged, whose judgment is not warped by self-interest. And from whom have we a right to expect the assumption of this proud and holy mission of meditation if not from the men in the pulpit—whose very vocation in life it is to ascend to the sources of moral obligation, to discover justice and to proclaim it? They should not, indeed, turn agitators, they should not identify themselves completely with any special reforms, they should rather work out the formulas for the solution of the moral problems of society leaving it to others to apply these formulas. They should supply the ideal standard by which to measure and guide the progress of social reform.

And now, if we ask, Why is it that the clergy do not fulfil the important function to which I have just referred, the answer must be: Because they have not been trained to fulfil it; because their preparation has been such as to leave them altogether unfitted, miserably unfitted, to undertake a large moral work of this sort. At the end of the last century a Christian writer wrote: that it is the duty of the Christian minister to teach not what Christ taught, but what he would have taught had he lived at the present day. Ah, if that view had been adopted, the state of religion to-day would be very different from what it is, and the influence of the pulpit would be vastly greater than it is. I have recently looked over the catalogues of some of our leading theological seminaries. I find that in them the old view prevails, namely: that it is the duty of the minister to teach what Christ taught, not what he would have taught if he had lived to-day. I find that the curriculum of studies in these seminaries is still based on the theory that the sum total of religious truth is embodied in the Bible. And because the Bible is written in two ancient languages, the Greek and the Hebrew, a great deal of the student's time is spent in the philological study of the Greek text, and of the Hebrew text. And because, in order properly to understand the Hebrew, it is necessary to study the Arabic, Syriac, etc.; therefore considerable attention is also paid to these cognate languages. But I ask, How is the young candidate for the ministry, who has been trained in this fashion, prepared to grapple with the living questions of the present day? How is he to help mankind in wrestling with these questions?

Let me specify a little further. The minister of religion must be an educator. It is his duty to take charge of the moral and religious education of the young. Yet I do not find that the theory of education is included in the curriculum of any of our seminaries. I will undertake to say that there is not one minister out of a hundred who is at all acquainted with the recent advances that have been made in the theory of education. And yet the minister is called upon to deal with the most difficult of all the problems of education —the problem of the right moral and religious education of the young. Ignorant as our clergy are of educational methods, should it surprise us that the current Sunday-school teaching has sunk to the low level on which we generally find it? Again, it is the special function of the minister of religion to build up character—to influence his fellow-men for good. But different men should be approached in different ways. Before attempting to cure a moral disease, it is necessary to make a correct diagnosis of the case, to be sure that one understands the exact nature of the disease, with which one is to deal. But to do this with success presupposes a knowledge of the

facts of psychology, as well as psychological tact. But how many of our clergy have this needful equipment? How many have given the subject of psychology careful thought? The minister of religion is often called upon to deal with the criminal classes; but how many ministers have so much as considered the problems of penology? The minister of religion is to play the part of a mediator in the struggle between labour and capital; but how many of our ministers have more than a superficial knowledge of economics and social science? Now, if the theory of education, if psychology, if penology, if economics can be studied in the Bible, then it is proper that the major part of the student's time in the seminary should be devoted to the study of the Bible. But if not, then it is time that new methods be employed in the training of those who are to guide the moral development of the race. And in this direction especially, reform is urgently needed. What I ask seems to me a very simple matter. I ask that a person who is to fill a certain vocation in life should fit himself for that vocation, and not for something else. What would you think of an engineer who should spend his time in the polytechnic school in studying the history of engineering, making himself perfectly familiar with the manner in which bridges were built five hundred years ago, but should remain entirely ignorant of the way in which bridges need to be built at the present day? Suppose that, after a three or four years' course, such a student were sent out into the world with his diploma. What sort of bridges do you think would he build? What sort of a practical engineer would he make? And what shall we think of the young candidate for the ministry, who has spent his time in the seminary in studying the history of his religion, who is perfectly familiar with the kind of religion which Jesus taught eighteen hundred years ago? Do you think that he is altogether fitted, under the altered conditions of modern life, to help his fellow-men in their moral need, to satisfy the cravings of the religious nature? It seems to me, therefore, that a radically different method of educating the moral teachers of the community is a necessity, if things are to change for the better.

But there is a second impediment which seriously abridges the usefulness of our modern preachers. I mean that they are called upon to preach too often. One, in most cases, two sermons a Sunday are expected of every clergyman. Now there are thoughtless people who believe that to deliver one or two discourses a week is a trifling matter, and that a man whose sole occupation is to do this must lead a comparatively easy and enviable life. But, in the first place, no one can engage with heart and soul in the work of moral teaching without having many other onerous duties imposed upon him, such as the charge of the moral instruction of children, the superintendence of charities and literary labour of various kinds. But even the shaping of a discourse is not the easy matter which it may seem to be. If the minister is required to utter himself week after week, if he is compelled to give out constantly without being allowed to replenish his mental resources, the result must be as follows: Either he becomes a mere pulpit drone, repeating with eternal sameness the monotonous rigmarole of dogma, revamping musty texts for the thousandth time and painting over commonplaces and platitudes with a thin varnish of sanctity. But in that case the people will desert him, and his influence will be reduced to a minimum. Or he may take refuge in sensationalism. He may deal with the burning questions of the day—but not in a sincere spirit, not as one who seeks light for himself and others, but as one who uses these questions simply for dramatic effect. But, in that case, though he may attract great crowds and entertain them, he demeans his great office, and makes himself an object of contempt to all right-minded people. Or, if the minister be of a different stamp, if he earnestly desire to help his fellow-men in their moral struggles, if the great moral problems of the time appeal to his heart, then he will find himself placed in a most unfortunate predicament. These problems require time and study—a great deal of time and a great deal of study. But, if the minister be compelled to speak week after week, he cannot possibly give the necessary time and study for their due consideration. The consequence will be that he will fling out half utterances, that he will deal with the great questions in a slipshod, unsatisfactory way; that he will become more and more dissatisfied with his own performances, as time goes on, and that the vice of conscious intellectual dishonesty will

creep into his soul and mar his inner life. This is what your constant demand for utterance leads to, this is the condition to which you reduce your ministers. You force them to become intellectually dishonest. For a man who is compelled to speak upon a subject without having thoroughly explored it, must become intellectually dishonest, and must, sooner or later, awaken with horror to a realizing sense of his inward condition. You spoil the noblest natures in your pulpits, and make them ignoble in their own eyes.

I think it is time that some one should have the courage to speak out plainly in regard to these matters. You are destroyers of those who serve you, by asking of them a service which it is beyond their strength to give, or their conscience to approve. It is not right that there should be only one preacher in any given pulpit; there should be a corps of preachers. It is not right that a minister should be asked to write fifty sermons a year. If he does attempt it, the kind of spiritual food which he gives his people will inevitably become diluted and innutritious. Applying a higher intellectual and literary standard, ten or a dozen discourses on morals and religion a year are all that can properly be expected of any man. But every such discourse would tell, its delivery would mark an event, it would appeal to humble hearers, and would equally attract the more intellectual. It ought to be distinctly remembered, though the clergy may close their eyes to the fact, that one of the reasons why so large a number of intelligent persons are drifting away from the churches is because the intellectual quality of the sermons is unsatisfactory—because their minds, nourished on the strong meat of science or of the best literature, refuse to be fed on mental pabulum of a poorer and weaker sort.

But there is one function of the preacher to which I have not yet directly alluded, and which is believed to be, and, in some sense, is the highest of all. The preacher is not only to be a teacher of morals but of religion. He is to set forth a philosophy of life, to define the attitude of man toward the universe, to try to answer those eternal questions which the human heart propounds to Destiny. Now different answers are returned to these questions by the different Religions. But certain it is that no one, no matter what his religious views may be, can return an answer to these questions which shall be acceptable to the educated men and women of this age unless he keep abreast of the culture of the age, and unless sufficient leisure be allowed him for deep and searching meditation. I, for one, believe that even those who continue to accept the old views will have to re-cast them in new forms, and, I believe, furthermore, with all my heart, that new statements of religion will be formulated, that new ways of obtaining religious satisfaction and peace will be found.

This is Easter Day, the day of the festival of the Resurrection. There needs no school-men's arguments, no dreary chain of dialectical evidence to prove to those who believe as we do that Resurrection is a fact. On every hand we see Nature rising, amid the glory of flowers and the songs of birds, from the long slumber into which she has been plunged. And, as in the life of Nature so in the life of man, that which is best and most vital in us—and religion expresses what is best and most vital—cannot perish.

"Wild, wild wind, wilt thou never cease thy sighing;
Dark, dark night, wilt thou never wear away;
Cold, cold church, in thy death sleep lying,
The Lent is passed, thy passion here but not thine Easter Day."

That Easter Day, that resurrection of religion will come when a new race of religious teachers shall arise, who will be consecrated by mental and moral fitness for their work, whose word will again be mighty, as of old, to guide the nations, and who shall carry the glad tidings of a higher life to the ends of the earth.

Truthfulness without charity is a vice and not a virtue, as love without truthfulness to moral right becomes idolatry.

Some one has said that we never go to meet, of set purpose, the important things of life. We turn suddenly round a corner, and come upon them all at once.

Joy is a prize unbought, and is freest, purest in its flow when it comes unsought. No getting into heaven, as a place, will compass it. You must carry it with you, else it is not there. You must have it in you, as the music of a well-ordered soul, the fire of a holy purpose, the welling-up out of the central depths of eternal springs that hide their waters there.

Ruskin's "Seven Lamps of Architecture," considered as Parables.

IV.—The Lamp of Beauty.

Did you ever consider what a wonderful and most mysterious endowment of our nature is our sense of beauty, our pleasure in it, our longing for its perfect presence? Beyond that which is useful, true, and good, beyond the orderly and salutary, there clings obstinately to the soul of man the idea of what is beautiful. A man may not be able to explain it, but there it is; he may not be able to justify it, but there it is. He may not agree with other men as to its place and importance, but there it is. From the veriest savage to the highest intelligence of genius, each insists that there is such a thing as beauty, each longs to achieve it, each admires and finds delight in what he admires. What is is it, this incorrigible, importunate, indestructable sense of beauty, which nothing wholly satisfies, yet which is capable, even in its imperfect forms, of giving such high and exquisite pleasure? What is this fitful, capricious, fugitive thing which is so different to different eyes and hearts? What is this faculty of our nature which makes us think the sunset and the dawn, the rich landscape, the noble building, the sea in its glory, the peaceful lake, the mighty flood and the roaring torrent, the mountain pass and snowy peaks, "the pomps of midsummer," and the midnight stars, beautiful? What is it that makes us find what we call beauty—infinite, inexhaustible, unfathomable beauty—in the succession and harmonies of sound? It is not surely their conformity to established rules, their mathematical subtleties of proportion and relation, indispensable conditions as these may be: but the beauty of the great composer's idea and work is something over and above and far higher than this, and appeals to something in us which thinks not of science and numbers, though without science and numbers the work could not be. What is it that presents itself with equal charm, admiration, and delight, not to the outward sense but to the inward eye; which thrills at a line of poetry; which in human character, besides goodness and force of conscience and beneficence, discerns in a soul here and there, beauty; the beauty of holiness? What is it that discerns and loves to dwell upon beauty in a little child, in the fair maiden, in youth and health and brightness; and not only in these, but often in an old woman's face all scarred and seamed with suffering, pain and tears? What is this mysterious and primary quality dwelling in such different shapes and defying all analysis? And what are we that have eyes and souls to perceive it? Perhaps if we could answer these questions we should know the great ultimate mystery, "What man and God is."*

God has filled his world with beauty, and has made man to delight in it. Why? We may rightly assume one answer, to quicken the sense of wonder, reverence, love and gratitude; for if this does not wholly account for beauty, it accounts for so much of it as to amply justify its importance to us as spiritual beings. Yet another aspect of the answer will be in the fact that beauty, in itself neither moral nor immoral, but essentially a spiritual thing, is intended to be a revelation to the soul of God Himself, "the garment thou seest Him by." A third aspect of the answer may be seen in the prophetical character of beauty, prophetic of that which is beyond, of the great day of the new heavens and the new earth, which shall see the the "holy city descending out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." Or, if we travel in another direction, we may say that the reason for beauty and man's desire for it and delight in it, is to set him in perpetual antagonism with the materialism of life, with its grossness and rudeness. Who can make friends with beauty, with strains which seem echoes from within the veil, with evening glories and summer days, of which the mind seems unequal to take in all the charms? who can make friends with this strange mysterious, spiritual thing called beauty and not feel refined and purified, and not see and hear in it a call to something higher and nobler than animal appetites or mere worldly ambition?

This is the mission of poets and artists, and of the great critics like Ruskin and Hamerton, to teach us to see and feel and love the beautiful.

For many of us see so dimly, and hear so faintly, and are so little educated, that we scarcely know how to look for beauty nor what to admire. We need guides and interpreters. We say we have "no feeling" for

* See Dean Church on "The Sense of Beauty."

art, but what we really mean is that our art-sense has not been developed. It is the perennial function of the artist to cause men to open their eyes and unclose their hearts. The blessed influences of beauty touch us all somewhere, but some they touch feebly, and many are conscious that there is something wonderful going on, but alas! they do not know what it is. Now it is the blessed work of the lover of beauty, the poet, the painter, the critic, who has given the devotion of a lifetime to gain a knowledge of beauty, to teach man to see, to open to them the sealed book of the heaven and the earth, to make the heart thrill with the lessons which flow from the glory of God in the beauty of the world, and the glory of man in the creations of genius.

For it is not lack of beauty which any man, the poorest and the most obscure, has to complain of, but the lack of eyes to see, and ears to hear, and a heart to understand. Beauty is everywhere. I never saw a more beautiful chord of colour than a few days ago when the rain-water was running over the pavement of one of our Birmingham streets, and there was the gleam as the sunshine gleamed upon them in those washed stones of all the colours you see in a Welsh mountain stream, more beautiful than the play of colour in the costliest diamond. There it was without money and without price. Yes, beauty is everywhere, and the most beautiful things are the most common. This is the great truth I find set forth in Ruskin's lecture on "The Lamp of Beauty." The beautiful in architecture as distinct from that which conveys the sense of power and majesty, Ruskin tells us, is in the main the imitation of natural objects—leaves, flowers, the arching of trees, birds, serpents, the human frame, and so forth. All the most lovely forms and thoughts of architecture are taken from natural objects, and the natural objects which are the most beautiful are those which are the most frequent.

"I think I am justified in considering those forms to be the most natural which are most frequent; or, rather, that on the shapes which in the every-day world are familiar to the eyes of men God has stamped those characters of beauty which He has made it man's nature to love, while in certain exceptional forms He has shown that the adoption of the others was not a matter of necessity, but part of the adjusted harmony of creation. I believe that thus we may reason from Frequency to Beauty, and, *vice versâ*, that knowing a thing to be frequent, we may assume it to be beautiful; and assume that which is most frequent to be most beautiful, I mean, of course, visibly frequent; for the forms of things which are hidden in caverns of the earth, or in the anatomy of animal frames, are evidently not intended by their Maker to bear the habitual gaze of man; and, again, by frequency I mean that limited and isolated frequency which is characteristic of all perfection; not mere multitude; as a rose is a common flower, but yet there are not so many roses on the tree as there are leaves. In this respect Nature is sparing of her highest, and lavish of her less, beauty; but I cull the flower as frequent as the leaf, because, each in its allotted quantity, where the one is, there will ordinarily be the other."

Here is a great truth too often overlooked. We have thought that the beautiful must of necessity be the rare, the uncommon, the expensive, the difficult to get. We have to learn that the beauty of the world resides in quite cheap and familiar things. We sometimes talk as though a few cultured, rich, refined people had a monoply of all the beautiful things of life; because they have fine houses and handsome furniture, and are able to place choice and beautiful pictures upon their walls, we are apt to narrow down our conception of what it is to possess the world's beauty to an admiration of those things that very few people can have. And yet, what is it makes up the beauty of the world? It is not even the flowers. The most important elements of the world's beauty are the common grasses that are trampled down in every field, the common blue overhead, the common green, purple, and silver grey of the sea, the common shimmer of the sunshine, the dewdrops on a spider's web, the bronzed bracken of the forest, the wonder of the budding leaf in spring, and of coloured leaf in autumn. Where is beauty? Every father and mother know that they have seen more beauty in a little child's eyes, and in the beautiful curves and play of its limbs than all the wealth of all the world could buy. Where is beauty? Richard Jeffries taught us to see beauty in London streets as well as on Sussex downs—magnificent cloud effects and play of colour such as no country scene could match.

This truth has its applications in other directions. Take the wonder, the romance, the passion of human love. Did anybody ever fathom it? Keats says,

> "Common as light is love
> And its familiar voice wearies not ever."

But what is it? How is it that a man or a woman

walks through the world in the midst of the commonplace multitude and is as indifferent to them all as if he were walking amid trees of the forest, and at last, some day, the rustle of a dress, the glance of an eye, the touch of a hand, the tone of a voice, and a life's fate—hangs on a word. In the presence of this love work becomes easy, burdens light, all darkness is shot through with bars of sunshine, and the world is transformed and filled with glory. But is such love only for princes and princesses, is it only for poets and romancers, is it confined to the rich and cultured? 'Tis a common experience, the oldest and most familiar story in the world. The enchanting drama of love is played out in the kitchen as well as in the parlour, and it makes beautiful the cottage no less than the castle.

Carry out the same thought into religion. What is the loveliest thing on earth that any religion ever produced? Its finest flower is a true, a gentle, true, loyal, loving soul. The beautiful thing about religion is not the fables that enrich its birth, nor the cycle of myth and mystery that girdles its founder, nor the story of a child miraculously born. We talk of the "Madonna and Child." Every father has seen the madonna and the child in his own home and a more wonderful and beautiful madonna than ancient story can make real to him. The wonderful, beautiful thing about religion is not in its ritual, its splendid ceremonial, its stately service, its costly cathedrals. All these are nothing compared with those cheap and, thank God, frequent things,—love, duty, tenderness, patience, fidelity, and human help.

The Bible speaks of "the beauty of holiness," and of all things eye hath seen, ear hath heard, heart hath conceived, mind hath imagined, nothing can equal this. All the grace, purity, sweetness, loveliness, rapture, and grandeur of nature are but symbols of this supreme beauty, the beauty of holiness. But in what does it consist? In rare, and for the most of men, quite impossible achievements? or in wonderful and conspicuous acts of sacrifice and heroism? or in the devotee's lonely and ecstatic experience? or in virtues and graces that can belong only to a few? Not so. The most frequent graces are the most beautiful. The beauty of goodness, that which makes goodness lovable, attractive, and winning, is in qualities that the humblest may aspire to, in kindness, in fellow-feeling, in quick sympathies, in cheerfulness, in the sunny temper, in much consideration for others, in wide thoughts for the rest of the world, and these are the graces that make the character far more beautiful than gifts of genius, imaginative power, active force, or dominating will.

Lastly. Just in proportion to our keen enjoyment of what is beautiful is our responsibility. Close beside us in our enjoyment are the dark, dismal ugly sides of human life. Surely what we can do to brighten and cheer the less favoured, and to impart to them something of that which is so precious and delightful to us, our very enjoyment of beauty bids us to do. You the educated, you who have all literature open before you, and can read at leisure the books you admire; you who have been trained to see, appreciate and admire all that is fair and beautiful, whose eyes have been opened to discern beauty in many forms, who can surround yourselves in your homes with its memorials, surely you have a debt to those whose lot is not cast in pleasant places. That sense of beauty, that delight in beauty, are God's gifts as much as wealth, or influence, or ability of any sort; and God's gifts are not only to be used and employed, they are to be shared and communicated. We have not only to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick; we have not only to labour that truth and justice may prevail in the lowest as in the highest places of society; it is ours also to carry into hard, rough lives something of the gladness in beauty that brightens ours—to carry into the dullness, the gloom, the squalor of courts and alleys, of hospitals and workhouses, and of poor sick rooms, this delight in that which refines and spiritualises human life. It is perhaps little that we can do, and, compared with some things, of little account in itself. But if it is only a witness of our sympathy, and of our wish to impart what we delight in ourselves, it carries with it a blessing. The flowers by the bedside of the sick; the dull hour made light by reading a poem or singing a song; the effort, frank, generous, sincere, of the friendly and equal intercourse as between man and man, are often the cup of cold water offered to those whom Christ loves. Better still, the kindness, the fellow feeling, the tenderness, the human sympathy, the sense of honour, companionship,

the things that are in themselves the beauty of holiness, these are a gift, a sweet odour, a poem, a melody far more beautiful than anything we can carry in our hands or read with our lips. To *be* yourself beautiful in soul and temper, that is the greatest of all gifts to your fellow men.

JOSEPH WOOD.

Manchester College (Oxford) Letter.

JULY.

We are now *en vacances*. Session 1895-6 came to a close at the end of June. Next session commences about October 20th. We are now dispersed about the country, some *supplying* here, some there, some nowhere. My last letter brought us to the middle of term. The remaining weeks passed merrily, spite of looming examinations and closing agonies. Eights Week was as gay as ever, and the contests on the river as keen. New wrested the supremacy from Magdalen, and is credited with being the fastest boat that has been on the river for some years. On the parks there were several first-class cricket fixtures, in which the 'Varsity distinguished themselves. The feature of Commemoration Week was the conferring of degrees, at the Encœnia, on Mr. Joseph Chamberlain and Mr. John Morley.

Herr Liebknecht—the leader, with Bebel, of Social Democracy in Germany—included Oxford in the lecturing tour he has been making here, previous to his return to Germany and his four months' imprisonment at the close of the Reichstag Session. His lecture took place in Eights Week, and, in spite of that week's festivities, attracted a large audience, composed, in the main, of undergraduates. He was enthusiastically received, and loudly and almost unanimously applauded in the course and at the close of his speech—further evidence to show that the lever is working in Oxford, though this is of the Fabian rather than of the Social Democratic order, and repudiates Marx, upon whom German Social Democracy may be said to be based. Liebknecht confined his speech almost entirely to giving a rapid sketch of the history of the Socialist movement in Germany, with which from the start he has been so uniquely and vitally connected. It was really a spoken biography. Dr. and Mrs. Aveling also spoke.

We have been *supplying* at Newbury this term, and received a hearty welcome from the faithful few who still cling to the old chapel. Mr. Connell has accepted an invitation to be their pastor for the space of six months. His duties commence in August. We wish him and the valiant little body he will minister to "God-speed." We shall all look back with pleasure to our week-end at the quiet old country town.

The Children's Mission is progressing. At the close of term we numbered some forty children. In addition to the Sunday School, a Singing Class, a Girls' Sewing Class, and a Mothers' Meeting have been started by several members of the chapel congregation. We have several enthusiastic and energetic workers connected with the movement, and it is hoped that the foundations of a successful Mission are being laid. This may in the future, in some small measure, supply the need so many of us now feel for practical experience during our student days.

Several of us have contributed to the July number of *The Stepping-Stone*, the new organ of the South Wales movement. Mr. Whitaker has an article entitled "Lourdes: The Divine Illusion." Mr. Johnson replies to an article in the June number, "Was Jesus a Demagogue?" with "Jesus the Democrat;" Mr. Thomas has an article entitled "Moses or Christ?" and Mr. Anderton a Sonnet. All interested in ministers in the budding should read *The Stepping-Stone!*

The closing ceremonies of the Session passed off as usual. Mr. Steinthal gave the Visitors' Address, and Mr. Tarrant conducted the Valedictory Service. It is to be regretted that this service, which is in itself beautiful and sacred, should come at the close of what is the most wearisome day of the session, when most of us, including the retiring students, are quite incapable of entering truly and fully into its spirit. Our annual supper was a great success. Speeches were at a high level. Mr. Pearson represented the Home Missionary College, and we sent a contingent of four to their Annual Soiree, at Manchester. Four of our number are leaving us. They take our good wishes into the world with them. Mr. Connell goes to Newbury, Mr. Gorton to Lewes, Mr. Weatherall (our Senior) and Mr Pope are seeking pulpits. Mr. Whitaker is our Senior next year. We look forward to new faces —"The old order changes, giving place to new." May the new more than supply the place of the old is a well-meant wish!

Voices in the Air.

Oft in the pleasant talk of waking dreams,
I hold communion with the woods and streams,
Speak to the garrulous trees when winds blow high,
And hear responses 'twixt the earth and sky;
I ask old Ocean when he chafes and rolls,
Whether he chides, rejoices, or condoles,
And hear, with sympathy I deem divine,
His awful voice make answer back to mine.

Beside the boulder on the rocky shore,
Forlorn old relic of the days of yore,
Ere earth was trod by foot of human kind,
I hear the wandering whispers of the wind;
Voices like Memnon's in the olden day,
That breathed soft music to the morning ray,
And spoke of mysteries to wondering men,
Within their hope, but far beyond their ken.

And all the voices, all the sounds and sighs,
The half-formed questions and the mute replies,
Breathe but one mingled hymn, and psalm, and song
Which day and night, and morn and eve prolong,
In waves of music rippling low and clear,
Unheard but of the mind that seeks to hear,
One psalm sublime, around, beneath, above,
Words of a myriad meanings, GOD IS LOVE.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Little White Lily.

Little White Lily sat by a stone,
Drooping and waiting, till the sun shone ;
Little White Lily, sunshine has fed ;
Little White Lily is lifting her head.

Little White Lily said "It is good :
Little White Lily's clothing and food."
Little White Lily, drest like a bride !
Shining with whiteness, and crowned beside.

Little White Lily, drooping with pain,
Waiting and waiting for the wet rain,
Little White Lily holding her cup ;
Rain is fast falling, and filling it up.

Little White Lily said "Good again,
When I am thirsty, to have nice rain,
Now I am stronger, now I am cool ;
Heat cannot burn me, my veins are so full."

Little White Lily, smells very sweet ;
On her head sunshine, rain at her feet.
Thanks to the sunshine, thanks to the rain !
Little White Lily is happy again.

—*Geo. MacDonald.*

What the Moon Saw.

A LONELY BOY.

I am a poor lad, I live round the corner in one of the narrowest lanes of the city. I have plenty of light, though ; for my room is in the top of the house, and I can look out over all the roofs. The first days after I came to live in town, I felt very much cooped up and lonely. Instead of the forest and the green hills, I now had nothing but the dingy chimneys all around as far as I could see. Not a single friend had I here, not one familiar face to greet me. One evening I was standing, with a very sad heart, at my window, I opened it and looked out. Oh, what gladness came over me ! I beheld a face I knew, a round friendly face, my best friend over there from home. It was the moon, the dear old moon, just the same without a bit of change, looking exactly as she used to do, when she peeped in upon me through the willows on the moor. I kissed my hand to her, over and over again, and she shone right into my room, and promised that, every evening, when she was out, she would look in upon me for a short time. And this promise she has faithfully kept ever since. It is a pity she cannot make a longer stay. Every time she comes, she tells me of something or other that she has seen the night before, or the same evening. "Just paint you the scenes that I tell of," said she, on her first visit, "and you will possess a very pretty picture book." This I have done for many an evening now, I could in my fashion, give a new "Thousand and One Nights in Pictures." It was not every evening, however, that the moon came, frequently a cloud stood between her and me.

THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE CHICKENS.

"Yesterday," said the Moon to me, "I was peeping down upon a little court-yard, with houses on every side of it. There lay a hen with eleven chickens, and a beautiful little girl was jumping round about them. The hen clucked, and spread her wings in great terror over her little young ones. Then the little girl's father came out, and scolded her ; and I glided away and thought no more of the matter. But this evening, only a few minutes ago, I looked down again into the same court-yard. There was perfect stillness. But presently the little girl came out. She stepped softly over to the hen-house, raised the latch, and slipped in among the hen and chickens. They cried out loudly, and flew fluttering round about, while the little one ran after them. I saw it all plainly, for I was peeping in through a hole in the wall. I was quite angry with the naughty child, and felt glad when her father came out and caught her fast by the arm, and scolded her still more severely than he did yesterday. She hung down her head and turned it away, there were big tears in her blue eyes. "What are you doing here ?" he asked. She wept. "I wanted," said she, "to kiss the hen, and to beg her pardon for yesterday, but I did not like to tell you." And the father kissed the sweet innocence on the forehead ; I kissed her on the eyes and mouth.

THE BEAR THAT PLAYED AT SOLDIERS.

"It was in a little country town," said the Moon, "I saw it last year. Down in the inn parlour sat a man who was travelling about with a bear. He was eating his supper. Bruin, poor fellow, who never did any harm to anyone, grim enough though he looked,—poor Bruin stood outside, tied up behind the stack of firewood. Up in the garret, in the light of my clear rays, three little children were playing ; the eldest might be six years old, the youngest not more than two. Stump ! stump ! Was a step coming upstairs ! Who could it be ? The door flew open ; it was Bruin—great shaggy Bruin ! He had got tired of standing down there in the yard, and had now found his way upstairs. I saw it all," said the Moon. "The children were so frightened at the great shaggy beast, they crept each of them into a corner ; but he found them all three out, and touched them all over with his nose, but he did no harm whatever. This is surely a big dog, they thought, and so they began to stroke him. Then he laid himself down on the floor, and the youngest boy threw himself upon the beast, and hid his head, with its golden curls, in the beast's thick black fur, playing at hide-and-seek. Now the eldest boy took his drum, and beat upon it till it thundered again. Then the bear rose up on his hind legs and began to dance. It was very charming indeed. Next, each boy took his gun, and the bear must have one also, and he held it quite properly ; this was a splendid comrade that they had got. Then they marched—'one, two ; one, two.' Presently someone came to the door, and it opened. This was the mother of the children. You should have seen her dumb terror, her face as white as chalk, her mouth half open, her eyes fixed and staring. But the youngest boy nodded ever so joyfully, and shouted at the top of his voice, and said, "We are just playing at soldiers !" And at this moment the bear's keeper came in."—*Hans C. Andersen.*

Literary Fetish.

Mr. Grant Allen has lately shocked all literary people, earning for himself at the same time great reputation for honesty, by confessing that he has never read Burns! One almost envies Mr. Grant Allen the delightful experience of sitting down for the first time to read Scotland's great songster. Yet, if it be not affectation and the resolve to be singular at all costs, it is difficult to understand how a man could have lived in the world of letters, like Mr. Allen has done, and have missed Robert Burns. If he had said he had read him and didn't like him, that would have been another story, but not to have read "Highland Mary" or "Bonny Lesley"—well, what a treat Mr. Allen has in store.

It would be well, however, if Mr. Allen's honesty were a little more common. It is considered the altogether proper thing to admire, or at any rate to pretend to have read, certain classical and other authors. Yet if Mr. Jones and worthy Mrs. Smith could be questioned in some palace of truth, where nothing but absolutely honest speech is possible, their opinions would, we fear, very much shock all the literary proprieties. Are we ourselves quite sound in our inmost mind? There is Milton, for example. How many men, who write or talk about Milton with gushing admiration, ever read "Paradise Lost" all through? Who has read the "Faery Queen" from the first line to the last? and of those who have, who honestly pines over the loss of the concluding six books? Who reads Chaucer now, except members of Chaucer Societies, who are never in company ten minutes before they let everybody know of their experience, just as a man who has gone through and overcome great tribulation likes to talk about it, and extort the sympathy of those whose withers are yet unwrung. Or even Dante? We say reflectively, "He was a sublime man; so intense in his feelings, so vivid in his conceptions, so graphic in his portraiture!" But did we ever read his "Divine Comedy" throughout? Voltaire was clearly of opinion that a great many of us had not, for he observed to a respectable person who was rhapsodising about the sad-visaged Florentine — see how easily and familiarly I write about him—"Ah, yes! his reputation will be continually growing greater and greater, because there is now nobody who reads him." Charles Lamb, chatting about books and reading, says, "I have no repugnances. Shaftesbury is not too genteel for me nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a book. There are things in the shape, which I cannot allow for such. In this catalogue of books which are no books—biblia-a-biblia—I reckon court calendars, directories, pocket-books, draught-boards, bound and lettered on the back, scientific treatises, almanacks, statutes at large, the works of Hume, Robertson, Gibbon, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and, generally, all those volumes 'which no gentleman's library should be without;' the histories of Flavius Josephus (the learned Jew) and Paley's Moral Philosophy. With these exceptions, I can read almost anything." Beattie is not of much account now, though it would be as well if one were able to say he liked him; and Soame Jenyns, regarded in the light of a writer one "ought to know," scarcely outlived his generation, and was not of much account in it, if we accept in proof a contemporary stanza in which the following lines occur:—

> Where, like a farthing link boy, Jenyns stands,
> And the dim torch drops from his feeble hands.

But it is not without a shudder that I have observed the honoured names of Hume, Gibbon, and Robertson included in a category with almanacks and lettered draught-boards. I have the works of all three writers on the top shelves of my treasured library. Hume is in eight volumes, and I have read nearly to the end of the second. Gibbon I have never read, though I have always been drawn towards him by the recorded observation of some great man (whose name I forget at the moment) to the effect that it was reading the "Decline and Fall" that "first made him think." I have read Robertson's "History of Scotland," but not his other works; however, I feel quite comfortable on that score, having the volumes on my book-shelves, and unfeignedly intending to read them all through some day.

I need not say that it is far from my intention to question the absolute merits of the principal works of the men whose names are canonised in modern literature. Those merits, I unreservedly admit are beyond question. But what I am

anxious to know is, admitting, as we all do, that they are transcendently superior to the works of modern writers, how is it they are not read? Would anyone, having a reputation to preserve venture to rise in critical company and declare his preference for Thackeray over Fielding? I know I would not, although Richardson, with Dr. Johnson's approval, sneered at Fielding, and said, "if he had not known who the writer of 'Tom Jones' was, he would have thought it was an ostler." Yet, writing here anonymously, I do not mind confessing that though I have, as in duty bound, read "Tom Jones" once, I have read "Vanity Fair" half a dozen times. It is an added perplexity for the honest enquirer to discover that, of the writers whom he knows he ought to revere, if not to read, some are spoken of with disrespect in very high quarters. If we believe Plato, Homer was not such a great writer after all, and of Plato, himself, Mr. Lewis remarks that "he is a tedious and difficult writer, often quoted at second hand, but very rarely read. Men of culture usually attack a dialogue or two out of curiosity; but their curiosity seldom inspires them to further progress." Sophocles was seriously regarded as a lunatic by his own children, who ought to have known something about him. Aristophanes mercilessly chaffed Socrates, whilst Athenæus attempts to prove that the great teacher was himself illiterate. Virgil was declared by Pliny to have stolen such slight beauties as his poems may display. Quintilion says Seneca was no great shakes; Cicero and Plutarch are both down on Aristotle; Demosthenes is pooh-poohed by Hermiffus; and of Cicero it has been written he is "cold in the extreme, artificial, trifling, strained, tiresome!"

Coming down to later gods, does it not make the hair stand on end to find Tom Moore declare that he found Chaucer "unreadable?" Lord Lansdowne said he was secretly of the same opinion, but did not dare to speak of it. "A. K. H. B." writes: "I would rather read Mr. Helps than Milton." "What will you say," wrote Lord Chesterfield, "when I tell you that I cannot possibly read our countryman Milton through? Keep the secret for me, for if it should be known I should be abused by every tasteless pedant and every solid divine in Europe." Charles Lamb says "Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him," which, not to put too fine a point on it, is an inconvenient requirement in a favourite author. Even Shakespeare has not been spared. Ben Jonson, "rare Ben Jonson"—rarest of all in the matter of readers—began it with the repartee to Shakespearean admirers, who boasted that the great bard had never blotted out a single word he wrote: "Would that he had blotted a thousand," said Ben, and Mr. Samuel Rogers (whom everybody knows as the author of the charming, but never read poem, "The Pleasures of Memory") was very fond of repeating the joke, believing that Shakespeare was a greatly over-rated man. Well, after all, Tom," said Byron to Moore, "don't you think that Shakespeare was something of a humbug?" I have quoted Voltaire's scathing remark about Dante. "Can you read Voltaire's Henriade?" asked Mr. Senior of de Tocqueville. "No; nor anyone else?" was the prompt reply. Mrs. Browning humbly confessed that she could never read to the end Akenside's "Pleasures of the Imagination." Dr. Johnson had no respect for big names or literary reputations. He declared that Gray (Gray's "Elegy") was dull, and that Fielding was a blockhead. Of Richardson he said: "Why, sir, if you were to read Richardson for the story, you would hang yourself." Upon Gay's "Beggar's Opera" he pronounced the following verdict: "There is in it such a lobe-faction of all principles as may be injurious to morality." This criticism is perhaps outdone in originality and weight by that of the Duke of Queensberry on the same work. "This is a very odd thing, Gay," said his grace on reading the opera, "I am satisfied that it is either a very good thing, or a very bad thing."

Intimate as I am, of course, with the writings of all the men whose honoured names are here lightly spoken of—"beginning each morning with a book of Homer," and "spending my nights with Addison," not to mention spare hours stolen for delightful and easy converse with Chaucer, Spenser, Milton—it is natural that I should be pained when I read of distinguished persons declaring, with more or less boldness, that they don't care a fig for them. This boldness, it is true, is chiefly less, Dr. Johnson being the only one who ventures to talk treason in voice above a whisper. Voltaire, it will be observed, was careful to construct his epigram at

the expense of Dante in a way that left it to be understood that though the multitude were not able to live in the rarefied air of the Inferno or the Paradiso, he read these books constantly, and did not ever unduly hasten out of the Purgatorio. Tom Moore was evidently humbled when he found he could not read Chaucer. "In what terms some speak of him! while I confess I find him unreadable." Lord Lansdowne, his guilty secret stolen from him in a moment of surprise, implored that he might not be betrayed. Lord Chesterfield is equally nervous, and Charles Lamb's effected sprightliness does not hide the concern which he felt at the possible consequence of his indiscreet communicativeness. This is a healthy sign, and tempers the sorrow with which we see heresy springing up in unexpected places. Philip James Bailey roundly declares, striking the key-note of Festus, that—

> This time is equal to all time that's past
> Of like extent;

and there are probably not wanting people who say that affected enthusiasm for certain old writers, whose books we buy but do not read, prevails for reasons akin to those which make a flock of sheep put themselves to the inconvenience of jumping over an imaginary rail, because their leader has so leapt, or to those which make all Englishmen, with pretensions to respectability, wear high round black hats when head-gear of almost any other conceivable fashion would be more comfortable and more becoming. These are reasons which, to quote Mr. Gladstone, "I, for one, decline to listen to." And yet, and yet, do all the people who profess to admire Jane Austen really read her with as much enjoyment as they do William Black? Is it a crime to confess that one prefers Dumas Senior to Stevenson? And may not a man find Browning little to his mind without writing himself down as an ass? How much of our admiration for certain writers is mere fetishism? But, 'tis time to have done when one begins putting conundrums.

He who procrastinates reform yields to Satan all he asks.

All literary works that stimulate unproductive sensibilities may be counted as the gin-palaces of the mind.

About Finger-Rings.

The Jews first used the finger-ring in marriage. For this purpose they required it to have a certain value, and to be finally purchased. If it was bought on credit or taken as a gift, its power was destroyed. In Pliny's time it was made of iron, with a loadstone inserted as a gem; but Tertullian says that in his day it had become gold. The nuns of St. Ann, at Rome, however, show a rude silver ring, which they say is the wedding-ring of St. Ann and Joachim, the parents of the Virgin Mary. The Christian Church early adopted the custom of the marriage-ring. In ancient marriage rites it was placed first on the thumb in the name of the "Father," then removed to the first finger in the name of the "Son," to the third with the name of the "Holy Ghost," and the "Amen" fixed its place on the fourth. Among the Anglo-Saxons, when children were betrothed, a ring was given as a pledge to "wed," and our term "wedding." When this "wed" or pledge was made, the ring was put on the right hand, and when it was redeemed by actual marriage it was removed to the left. Their ceremony was very much like that of the present day—the bride was taken for "fairer or fouler," and promised to be "buxom and bonny" to her husband.

In the middle ages, solemn betrothal by means of a ring generally preceded marriage. Chaucer, in his "Troilus and Cresida," and Shakespeare, in the "Two Gentlemen of Verona," describe the ceremony. The custom of inscribing short sentences, called "posies," on wedding-rings—which has lately been revived—is also noticed by Shakespeare, and other dramatists of the next century. Collections of these quaint protestations are common in books of curious literature. One of the most whimsical is that inscribed on the inside of the wedding-ring used by John Thomas, Bishop of London, 1753, for his fourth wife. It ran thus: "If I survive, I'll make them five."

It is to be presumed that this good bishop did not regard Timothy's matrimonial charge as strictly binding. The Gimmel ring, which has met with great favour lately as a marriage-ring, is of comparatively modern origin, the earliest mention of it with which we are familiar being in the "Beggar's Bush," by Beaumont and

Fletcher. It is composed of two hoops, which unite and form one, and was first made in France. Rings were also the emblem of spiritual marriage and dignity, as early certainly as the fourth century. In the Romish Church, the episcopal ring is of gold, set with a rich gem, usually an amethyst, and engraved. The Pope has two rings, one bearing the likeness of St. Peter, used for ordinary business, and never except by the Pope's hand or in his own presence; the other bears a cross, the head of both Peter and Paul, and generally the reigning Pope's name and arms. It is used only for bulls, and is broken at the death of the Pontiff, and a new one given by the city of Rome to his successor.

Nature's Reminder.

(A WARNING TO HOLIDAY-MAKERS).

Out from the roaring town he sped,
A sick soul wearied of the din,
Or deemed it was the din that bred
The sickness and the fret within.

He sought a wild and wind-vexed heath,
At word of such wise folk as told,
"Taste for thy malady the breath
Of summer on the open wold.'

He came athwart a mountain's stair,
And climbed upon its broken way,
He laughed to greet the plenteous air
And tossed it from his brow like spray.

He revelled in the dancing light,
The changing cloud, the flying gleam,
The rocks were rapture in his sight,
And music was the plunging stream.

In heather did he steep his hands,
And silken grasses did he twine
Above his forehead, for the land's
Delight was in his blood as wine.

So for a season of swift mirth,
Upon the mountain's windy floor
He drank elixir from the earth
And thought to keep it evermore.

He might not keep it, and it passed:
Passed ere the day was grown to eve,
And in those solitudes at last
He stood a hapless fugitive,

Who, flying, found he had not fled;
His joy, a thing of storm, was slain,
The sickness he had thought to shed
In angrier guise was back again.

He might not keep what he had sought
As medicine for a bitter mood,
Not on such graceless terms is bought
Nature's divine solicitude.

"Ah, bring me not, thou peevish child,
Thy sick distemperature of brain,
As though my mountains had been piled
To minister to human pain;

"As though the life of air and sun,
Water and wind and mist and snow,
Were phantasms of a life that's done
And vanished in the long ago;

"As though no power of joy endowed
Them, and no sense for love or light,
As though a cloud possessed the cloud,
And night were at the heart of night.

"But love them for themselves, for what
They feel and veritably are;
That they assuage thy soul is nought—
There's more than starlight in the star;

"There's more than flesh about thy bones,
There's more than blood around thy heart,
Ay, in thy roaring city's stones
A Spirit and a Breath have part.

"No boons of mine shall any reap
Who this my precept have not known—
My heart of peace for those I keep
Who bring a peace that is their own,

"And wait with reverence that presumes
Only to taste what Love confers,
Not patients in my ante-rooms,
But in my Temple worshippers."—A. B.

Sunday School Lessons.

BY DAVID MACRAE.

RELIGION.

LIFE.

He liveth long, who liveth well,
All other life is short and vain;
He liveth longest, who can tell
Of living most for heavenly gain.—*Bonar.*

1. *What is Religion?* Religion is the love of goodness, and the consequent endeavour to be good.

Matt. v 3-12; 1 John iii. 7; James i. 27.

2. *Is Religion a question of Church and Creed?* No; a bad man is never a religious man, whatever church he may belong to, or whatever faith he may profess.

Matt. vii. 21-27; 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.

3. *What is the purpose of God's Revelation and the life and work of Christ?* To let us see what goodness is, and get us to be good.

1 Kings viii. 36; Psa. xxv. 6; Psa. cxviii. 27; Ezek. xx. 11; Matt. i 21; John i. 6-9; John v. 19, 20; John x. 11; Acts iii. 17-21; Acts x. 38; Acts xx. 18-21; Rom. xii. 1, 2; 1 Peter ii. 21.

4. *What is the use of Churches, Creeds, Sacraments, and all religious observances?* They are of use in so far as they help us to become good.

Isa. i. 11-18; 1 Cor. iii. 3; James ii. 14-26.

5. *Are they otherwise of any use, or acceptable to God?* No; "neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." —Gal vi. 15.

Prov. xxi. 27; Jer. vi. 20; Jer. vii. 9, 10: Amos v. 23.

6. *What is it to be good?* To be good is to have our life inspired and guided by the Good Spirit, which is the Spirit of God.

Psa. li. 10; Psa. cxliii. 10; Luke vi. 45,; Rom. viii. 9-14; 1 Cor. ii. 12; 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17; 1 Cor. vi. 9-11.

7. *What kind of Spirit is God's Spirit?* It is the Spirit of Holiness and Love.

Isaiah vi. 3; John xiv. 16, 17; 1 John iv. 7, 8, 16; Rev. iv. 8.

8. *Why may every man inspired by this Spirit be said to be a Christian, though he may not yet have heard of Christ?* Because the Spirit of Holiness and Love is the spirit of Christ himself, and Christ will recognise all who are inspired by it as his people, and fellow-heirs with him of the heavenly inheritance.

Matt. xxv. 34-40; Acts x. 34, 35; Heb. vii. 26; 1 Pet. ii. 21, 22; 1 John ii. 29; 1 John iv. 7-9.

9. *If a man be truly a Christian, how will this appear in his life?* He will seek to do what is right, and to avoid what is wrong; to speak the truth; to be honest in his dealings; and to be merciful and kind. He will wish harm to no one, but will seek to do good even to those who do harm to him.

1 John ii. 6, 9, 10; 1 John iii. 2, 3; 1 Pet. i 15, 16, 22; Isaiah i. 16, 17; Zech. viii. 16; Eph. iv. 25; Deut. xvi. 20, xxv. 15; Micah vi. 8; Prov. xxi. 3; Ezek. xviii. 5-9; Amos v. 15; Matt. xviii. 21, 22; Matt. v. 43-48; Luke xxii. 50, 51; Col. iii. 13; Rom. xii. 20, 21; James i. 27.

10. *What is this good or Christian life sometimes called?* It is sometimes called a life of faith.

Rom i. 17, xi. 20; Heb. x. 38; Heb. xi. 6; Eph. ii. 8.

11. *Why so?* Because it is a life of practical trust in God—practical belief that God's way is the best way. It is thus a giving of ourselves to God.

Deut. viii. 5, 6; Psa. xxvii. 1, xxxvii. 3-6, xliv. 18; Psa. lvi. 11, 12; Psa. cxii. 7, cxix. 10, 11; Heb. xi. 6; 1 Peter v. 6-10; Rev. xv. 3.

News from the Field.

MIDLAND SUNDAY SCHOOL ASSOCIATION. — The twentieth Annual Meeting of this Association was held at Cradley on Saturday, July 4th.—Mr. S. T. Cross (Birmingham), the President, occupied the chair.—There was an attendance of about 100 teachers and friends, including the Revs. W. Harrison (Stalybridge), E. P. Hall (Cradley), H. McKean (Oldbury), J. Harrison (West Bromwich), I. Wrigley (Lye), and A. H. Shelley (Dudley); Mrs. Wright (Birmingham), Misses Badland (Kidderminster), Lloyd, Cross, Youngerman, Harrison, Cassey, E. Mould, M. Mould (Birmingham); Messrs. T. F. Derrington, G. Davis, W. H. Blumfield, J. Kimberley, W. Lockett, J. Taylor, Middleton, Johnson, E. H. Sims, Parker (Birmingham), A. W. Worthington, F. Taylor (Stourbridge), Baker (Oldbury), Watts (West Bromwich), H. Winbury (Kidderminster), W. H. Guest (Cradley), and Sam Mould (hon. secretary). A letter was read from Mr. Ion Pritchard (London), regretting his inability to be present, but sending friendly greetings on behalf of himself and the Committee of the Sunday School Association.—The annual report was scarcely as satisfactory as the last one. It showed a slight falling off in the number of scholars, but the average attendance had greatly improved. The teachers number 376, and the scholars 3814 (including 1260 adults), as against 383, 3919, and 1249, respectively, in 1894. The Treasurer's statement shews subscriptions received £6 15s. 6d., and expenditure £13 2s. 11d., a loss on the year of £6 7s. 5d. Instead of a balance in hand of £4 7s. 8d., as shewn by the last account, there is now due to the Treasurer £1 19s. 9d.—The Visitors' reports were again of a satisfactory character.—The President, in moving the adoption of the reports, considered that the schools were in a much better position than they were a year ago; although the number of scholars showed a slight decrease, there was a great improvement in the attendance and regularity. On behalf of the Association he extended a cordial invitation to the adult scholars and young teachers to the future meetings.—The Rev. E. P. Hall seconded the motion. —A cordial welcome was given to the Rev. W. Harrison as representing the Manchester District Sunday School Association.—Mr. Harrison, in reply, strongly urged the teachers to use the lesson notes in the *Sunday School Helper*, and described the methods adopted in Lancashire in teaching, examinations, etc.—The following appointments were then made:—President, Rev. Thomas Pipe; vice-presidents, Mr. F. Taylor and the Rev. A. A. Charlesworth; secretary and treasurer, Mr. Sam Mould; and auditor, Mr. J. Kimberley.—A cordial invitation was given to the teachers of the Dudley and Kingswood schools to join the Association.—After tea (kindly provided by the Cradley teachers and friends) the retiring President read a paper on "Our Schools—a Plea for better Teaching."—Mr. Cross complained that the great bulk of the teaching in our schools was very poor, and that the majority of our teachers could do better if they threw more sincerity into their work. He compared the state of the scholars at the present time with that of one hundred years ago, and said that much more was now demanded from our teachers; they are required to supplement the work of the day-schools with moral and religious training; but, unfortunately, all teachers do not

make a good use, or the best use, of their opportunities. The pupils require a living example on the part of the teacher, which will influence them through life. He instanced various defects in our teachers, such as the use of slang, temper, and neglect of duty, trusting to chance or inspiration instead of preparation. He laid great stress upon the personal influence of the teacher upon the pupil, and gave very instructive hints as to the kind of lessons to be given, with numerous illustrations from his own experience as a teacher. In conclusion, he urged that the pupils should be persuaded to grow slowly into sensible men and women; that the teachers should be contented to work patiently with the material at their command, with the view of enabling the pupils to meet the dangers which are sure to beset them in after years. —The paper was listened to with great attention and pleasure by the teachers present. At its conclusion, a discussion was opened by Mr. F. Taylor, who supported "day-school" methods of teaching. He contended that it was the duty of the parents to give moral and religious instruction to the children, to be supplemented by the teachers in the Sunday-school. Secular lessons with a religious bearing should not be the aim of the teacher; the secular part of the lessons should be secondary to the religious. He complained that many of our examinations were secular examinations upon secular subjects. Some of our teachers are not far removed above the scholars in secular instruction, but a long way in front in moral and religious feeling. He, therefore, pleaded for the work of the Sunday-school being kept distinct from that of the day-school. —The Rev. Isaac Wrigley thought that the majority of our teachers have only passed through elementary schools, and have learned no science. Some of the work suggested by Mr. Cross was, therefore, quite out of the range of such teachers. It was quite right to put before the teachers high ideals, but it was not much use teaching science, unless the teacher knew the subject thoroughly. Let there first be the willing mind, and the personal influence of the teacher would overcome all difficulties in the way of moral and religious teaching. —The Rev. W. Harrison urged that, although it was impossible to lay down a general rule to apply to all teachers, everyone was able to do something in the way of a living example to the scholars. Sunday should commence on Saturday night—the teacher would then be ready for his class. In answer to the objections raised to examinations, he said that one advantage was that if a course of lesson notes were adopted the most negligent teacher would know where to commence each Sunday. There was always a difficulty in getting the teachers to study, but if you could persuade them to show a good example to the scholars, the instruction would follow and be profitable. He strongly recommended various class-books issued by the Sunday School Association for the use of the teachers. —The Rev. E. P. Hall supported the claims of the teachers to sympathy and support. Some of the congregations would not lift a finger to help in the work of the schools. If the Sunday schools are to be a success, in connection with our churches, the members of the churches must take greater interest in them, and more sympathy must be extended to the teachers, without whose help so little could be done.—Hearty votes of thanks to the Cradley teachers, and to the retiring president for his address, brought a most successful and pleasant meeting to a close.

BANBURY.—On Wednesday afternoon and evening, June 24th, the scholars of the above Sunday school had their annual summer treat in the school and grounds of the chapel. A good tea of cake, bread and butter, &c., was partaken of by the children at four o'clock. Parents and teachers had their tea at five o'clock. During the afternoon and evening the young people fully enjoyed themselves with games, singing, &c., while they did not fail to appreciate the scrambles for sweets and nuts. Mr. Samuelson again very kindly lent his swings for the children's recreation, and thoroughly did they enjoy them. The weather was fortunately favourable for the party, and a very pleasant and happy time was spent together.

LYE.—On Sunday, June 28th, the annual floral services were held here, both afternoon and evening. The church was decorated with choice flowers and foliage on the occasion, and the children sang and recited with taste, expression, and spirit. The services were very well attended, and the collections amounted to about the same as last year. On Monday, July 13th, a demonstration was held of the united Sunday schools of the nine Nonconformist Churches, our Sunday school being one. The demonstration was a decided success, it being estimated that there were over 2000 children present. After going out in procession together, each school went its own way, all, with one exception, having their treat on that day. The Rev. I. Wrigley is a member of the executive of the Nonconformist Council for Stourbridge and Lye.

STOURBRIDGE DISTRICT UNION.—The first united service for the Sunday schools in this Union, was held at Stourbridge, on Whit-Monday. The Kidderminster school was met by the scholars from Lye and Cradley, and the three schools walked together through the High Street to the venerable chapel on the western side of the Lower High Street. The chapel was rapidly filled to overflowing, but by placing chairs in the aisles, room was found for all comers. The address by the Rev. J. J. Wright, of Chowbent, kept the attention and interest of the scholars unbroken, while the hearty and tuneful singing of the hundreds of children will not be quickly forgotten. At the close of the service, an adjournment was made for tea to the Wallaston Road Schools, where the Stourbridge ladies managed to provide in two sittings for more than 400 persons. The use of a field near the schools had been kindly granted by Mr. Sharp, and while one moiety of the visitors took tea the others passed the time pleasantly here. At half-past six, a move was made to the chapel, where a short meeting was held. The President of the Union, the Rev. A. W. Timmis, took the chair, and a vote of thanks to Mr. Wright for his admirable address of the afternoon was moved by Mr. F. Taylor, seconded by Mr. W. R. Blurton, and carried with very hearty applause.—Mr. Wright, in reply, urged the scholars to remember that the future of the schools was in their hands, and to resolve to make them better in the future than they had been in the past.—Miss Ellen Evers sang "Light in Darkness," and the choir contributed "The Merry Peasant" to the evening's entertainmentr At both meetings Mr. Forrest presided at the organ, and rendered efficient aid to the singing.